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Students to win big

Higher education standards secure better job prospects

LANSING—With promises of a brighter future for students, Michigan will set a national benchmark in high-school education through curriculum standards passed by the Senate and House and sent to the governor for her expected signature.

“We had intense discussion on these proposals in my district in a series of public meetings I arranged,” said Sen. Bruce Patterson, 7th District. “Parents, students and teachers all made worthwhile contributions to the dialogue and expressed legitimate concerns. The Senate and House heard their recommendations and made significant, positive changes to the legislation.”

Northville Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Leonard Rezmierski welcomed the higher standards.

“I applaud the legislature for taking on this very complex issue,” said Rezmierski. “Raising standards is important in this era of increased accountability and competition. Furthermore, the educational research is clear that setting high standards is a key aspect in improving student achievement.”

Rezmierski was cautious about the time needed by some districts to bring their programs into line with the new standards. But the State Department of Education has pledged to work with them in achieving the standards. Patterson expressed his interest in ensuring that current successful programs are maintained.

“I was concerned that vocational and technical education programs not be harmed, and they will not be,” said Patterson. “They are written into the scheme very well. Certain subjects will be approached in a ‘hands-on’ practical manner and can be spread over a longer time to ensure that vital content is mastered by all students.”

A foreign-language requirement was proposed by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Mike Flanagan and added to the package. It not only equips a student to understand another language and culture, but it improves the mind’s general learning ability. Due to the ease with which younger children master a foreign language, the legislation even allows students in elementary school to earn the two units.

The new curriculum standards will go into effect for students entering eighth grade in 2006 and graduating in 2011. Many economists have testified that a well-educated workforce will draw employers to this state and up-to-date standards will better prepare Michigan students for the technology jobs of the 21st century.

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